

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 23, 2014

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue Northwest  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki,

As Memorial Day approaches, veterans in the catchment area of the Veterans Affairs (VA) Black Hills Health Care System (BHHCS) are concerned about the future of health care provided to them at the Hot Springs Veterans Affairs Medical Center. While there remain outstanding disagreements concerning the reconfiguration of the BHHCS, the VA has regretfully decided to move forward with an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In the May 16, 2014, Federal Register notice, the VA has limited the public comment period to 30 days, closing on June 16, 2014. While we are familiar with the VA's desire to expedite the integrated EIS, we write today to request that the comment period be extended an additional 60 days to allow for comprehensive input from all stakeholders regarding the effects and impacts identified in 40 CFR 1508.8.

Granting an extension of the comment period would confirm your dedication to an "open, transparent, and inclusive" process, as you expressed in a letter dated May 18, 2012. Moreover, providing for an additional 60 days for public comment would reaffirm VA's assurances that a final decision has not yet been made. Considering that over two and half years have passed since the VA first released its proposal, we find that a total of 90 days for public comment is reasonable and fair for all concerned parties. Any changes to the VA that may impact the care America's veterans receive deserves the utmost examination.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to continuing to work with you to provide the best care possible to veterans in the BHHCS.

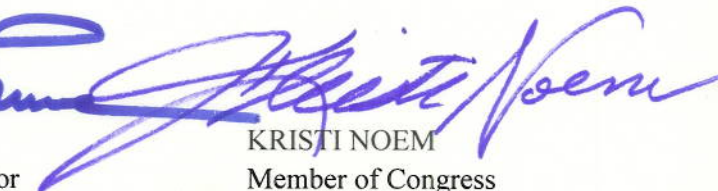
Sincerely,



TIM JOHNSON  
United States Senator



JOHN THUNE  
United States Senator



KRISTI NOEM  
Member of Congress

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

*Mike Enzi*

MIKE ENZI  
United States Senator

*John Barrasso*

JOHN BARRASSO  
United States Senator

*Cynthia D. Lummis*

CYNTHIA LUMMIS  
Member of Congress

*Mike Johanns*

MIKE JOHANNNS  
United States Senator

*Deb Fischer*

DEB FISCHER  
United States Senator

*Adrian Smith*

ADRIAN SMITH  
Member of Congress